

Lacrosse is His Inspiration

P.1

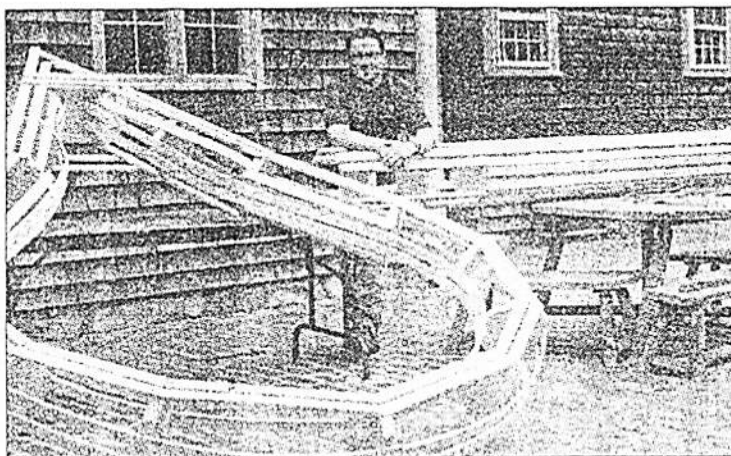
ARTISTS - DL

Artist sculpture is tribute to lacrosse teams

By MARIBETH CONWAY

A visiting artist found inspiration for his latest work while passing the athletic fields and witnessing the finesse of the town's lacrosse players. Only after Matthew Dehaemers embarked on a massive sculpture – a tribute to the town and the game of lacrosse – did both the boys and girls lacrosse teams win the state title, bringing a new meaning to the artist's work.

continued on page 14



A lacrosse stick by Artist Matthew Dehaemers transitions from simple materials found in Duxbury forests to the modern cuts of wood purchased at a local lumber yard. The stick is on display outside the Art Complex Museum.

Sculptor Draws Inspiration From Lacrosse Teams

continued from page one

After dotting the country in several art residencies, Dehaemers of Kansas City, Kan. spent four weeks in June as the artist in residence at the Art Complex Museum.

Dehaemers passed much time at the library with days spent reading up on Duxbury's history. "I try to research a community and be influenced by what I learn," he said. He found the town's shipping history fascinating, but each afternoon he passed the athletic fields by the library and could not help but notice the buzz of activity. Students of all ages, male and female, ran across the fields with their lacrosse sticks in hand.

The artist soon found himself looking up the history and culture of the game of



Dehaemers spent several weeks in Duxbury absorbing the town's history before embarking on his chosen project. Coincidentally, Dehaemer's chosen theme ties into the state championship title wins of the boys' and girls' teams.

lacrosse during those visits to the library. He was enthralled by the cultural roots of a game now popular in the northeastern states of the U.S.

"Typically when settlers conquer a land they also impose their culture on the people," he said. "Lacrosse was unique." The sport was actually adopted from Native American people and altered to fit the colonial culture. Native Americans would play a grand game lasting several days and covering three to four miles with up to 1,000 players per team. "Lacrosse was not just a game, it was a part of a culture; they would play in honor of people, in hopes of good crops, or to solve conflicts with neighboring tribes, not just for the sport of it." He explained that gambling bets on the game even led to a redistribution of wealth for tribes.

French Canadians later transformed the game into "a gentlemen's sport," he said. The game was simplified in the process.

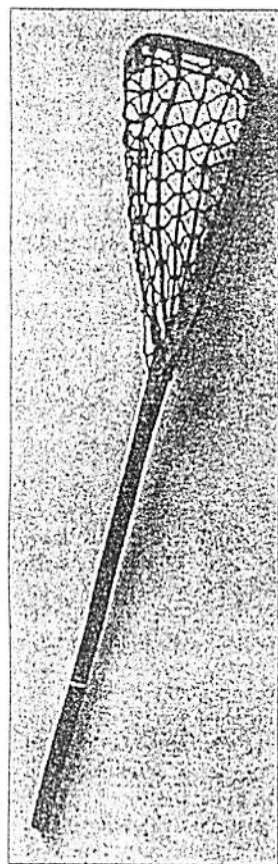
Dehaemers studied the traditional lacrosse stick, which was composed of hand-carved hickory with the basket to catch the lacrosse ball made of deer sinew. During the 1970s the modern stick of synthetic material, usually plastic, came into play.

The artist soon began construction on a 22 to 24-foot lacrosse stick as his tribute to the culture of the town. It was a coincidence when a short time later the boys' and girl's lacrosse teams both won the state championship.

The night before setting off on his sculpture, Dehaemers modeled a miniature stick out of cardboard, envisioning a form that would incorporate both the traditional sense of the lacrosse stick and the modern day stick.

Dehaemers' actual sculpture begins with branches of

natural wood, mostly red oak, at the base and transitions into a hint at the contemporary with machine cut pine straight from a local lumberyard. The challenge for Dehaemers was



A wooden stick made of hickory and deer sinew was typical of Native American teams.

forcing the wood to do as the artist pleased, particularly in bending the pine at the curve of the stick.

Dehaemers has left for another residency at the Delaware Center for Contemporary Arts where he will design a work in partnership with the Alzheimer's Association but his lacrosse stick can be found outside the Art Complex Museum by the tea hut.